

31 July 1957

ARGENTINE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

- I. Parties supporting the Argentine provisional gov't's call for constitutional revision appear to have won ⁹ 11% of the 305 constituent assembly seats in balloting on 28 July. The strong opposition registered, however, suggests an intensifying scramble for new political alignments.
- A. Present military gov't called elections as forerunner to general elections next Feb., in attempt to restore civilian rule.
- B. Gov't wants changes in constitution to prevent appearance of another Peron. These changes would weaken executive, strengthen judicial branch and increase provincial and municipal autonomy.
- II. No single group of over thirty participating parties received commanding vote in competition for almost 85 percent of electorate who voted Peronists in 1954.
- A. Pro-gov't Popular Radicals led race with slightly over one-quarter of total vote, winning 77 seats.
- B. In response to campaign by outlawed Peronista Party almost an equal number ^(of ballots) were left blank. This demonstrates Peronistas still important political factor.
- C. Since these votes do not count, Popular Radicals and other pro-gov't parties will have majority of seats.
- D. Anti-gov't Intransigent Radicals, led by demagogue Arturo Frondizi, placed third with over a fifth of vote and 73 seats but failed to attract widespread Peronista support.

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2. Gov't announced the Communist Party polled record vote of about 225,000 (of nearly 8,000,000 cast) winning 8 seats. Will have first Communist representation in any Argentine assembly.
- III. Under these circumstances, difficult to say how assembly--which is to meet before 1 Sept--will attempt to revise constitution. Nevertheless, military junta intends to turn over rule to civilian gov't by 1 May 1958.
- A. However, some chance of nationalization of power resources, including petroleum, according to US Ambassador Deaulac.
- B. Also, present election law, giving largest party two-thirds of congressional seats and second party other third, likely to be retained.
- C. In meanwhile, can expect increased jockeying for Peronista vote.
- IV. Meanwhile, [REDACTED] Peron will leave Venezuela for Nicaragua within next two days.

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